



# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** MARCH 31, 2015

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**THROUGH:** MARK B. JINKS, ACTING CITY MANAGER 

**FROM:** NELSIE L. BIRCH, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET 

**SUBJECT:** BUDGET MEMO #10: MAURY SCHOOLYARD INITIATIVE

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This memorandum responds to questions from Councilmembers Wilson and Smedberg related to the Maury Schoolyard Initiative, which is proposed to provide renovations to Maury Elementary School athletic fields and recreational areas. City staff prioritized both the stormwater and recreation field support requests as part of this project and the Maury athletic field request did not rank high enough to displace other planned City projects in the proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The request for additional funding for this project has come from the Maury Schoolyard Initiative advocacy group. Project costs provided by the Maury Schoolyard Initiative advocacy group are estimated at \$1.4 million to \$1.5 million. The ACPS School Board has included \$0.5 million of total project costs in their Proposed CIP. Private sources have committed \$0.4 million to the project. This leaves a funding gap of approximately \$0.5 million to \$0.6 million, based on the cost estimate provided by the Maury Schoolyard Initiative advocacy group.

### **What is City staff's recommendation for the appropriate process for evaluation of public-private partnership opportunities on Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) property?**

City staff encourages ACPS to develop public-private partnerships to support capital infrastructure improvements of ACPS-owned facilities. The Maury Elementary School parents should be lauded for their initiative. ACPS should evaluate these potential partnerships based on the total project cost of the improvements, the prioritization of the project against other stated ACPS capital infrastructure needs, and the ability to fund the project with existing ACPS resources available for capital improvements. Should a project supported by a public-private partnership be identified as a priority by the ACPS School Board, the School Board could if they chose to reprioritize funding within their capital funding, to support public-private partnership efforts. That might mean the ACPS School Board choosing a partnership project over another ACPS capital need. These decisions are at the discretion of the ACPS School Board.

Should the City decide to dedicate additional resources to the Maury Elementary School playground project, an expectation will be created that the City would contribute additional

funding in all cases like the Maury Schoolyard Initiative where ACPS is electing not to fund fully fund capital improvements at their facilities.

**Given the requests being made in support of this initiative, what existing Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding sources could be utilized to support components of the overall proposal?**

As part of the FY 2016 capital budget, ACPS has proposed to use \$5.5 million in prior year funding to support their FY 2016 capital program. Should the ACPS School Board determine that the Maury Schoolyard Initiative is a high priority prior year funding could be utilized to support the project. However, another ACPS capital project (or element of it) would need to have its funding reduced. The \$5.5 million in prior year balances are currently held by ACPS and could be accessed immediately outside of the current budget process with appropriate School Board action.

#### *Stormwater Initiatives*

Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) staff has reviewed the Maury site and determined that once the driveway apron is improved at the rear of the school, there will be no off-site stormwater from City rights-of-way entering the Maury school grounds. Moreover, the funding being sought is to address stormwater requirements triggered as a result of the proposed field and playground improvements.

Completion of this project will not contribute to City's overall stormwater pollution reduction requirements and/or mandated obligations. Impacts to the existing CIP would potentially divert funding from previously identified and higher priority initiatives such as the DASH facility flooding improvement project. The DASH facility has flooded several times since it was built due to an inadequate storm sewer system outfall. If funding is diverted, the facility will remain exposed to flooding risks and needed infrastructure improvement will not be implemented as scheduled.

ACPS currently maintains its own stormwater facilities including 76 of approximately 500 privately- and publicly-owned BMPs citywide. The City operates its own stormwater system under its MS4 permit requirements. This distinction is important as any changes to the City's role in maintaining ACPS' storm system could potentially lead to the City becoming the regulatory responsible party for maintenance of ACPS' storm sewer system.

#### *Recreation Facility Initiatives*

City staff does not recommend utilizing existing or planned RPCA capital projects funding for the Maury School playground recreation improvements, as the facilities do not meet long-term goals and objectives for RPCA in regards to maximizing the use of City athletic fields. Fields proposed at Maury will not be full-size fields and will primarily support physical education classes, recess, and sport team practices. The Maury rectangular field is not a regulation sized field, and will not support sport competitions. The ball diamond would be used for scheduled t-ball and coaches pitch games, but the current field is adequate for that use. The Maury Schoolyard Initiative advocacy group has estimated the total cost the turf field at \$200K, with an

expected City contribution of \$150K. The third party cost estimate being completed by ACPS staff will inform final turf field costs.

**In the event Recreation CIP dollars are utilized to support play space development at Maury Elementary, what type of Memorandum of Understanding would staff recommend to govern use and ensure City leveraging of recreation value?**

The City and Schools have a "Facility and Outdoor Maintenance and Use Agreement" that most recently was updated in October 2014 and executed by the ACPS Superintendent and the City Manager.<sup>1</sup> A cooperative agreement between the City and ACPS has been in effect since 1997. This MOU would govern facility programming and outdoor maintenance at this site, and would need to be amended to record any changes to the site map. The site map outlines organizational responsibilities for routine maintenance. Any enhanced level of facility maintenance would need to be funded by ACPS, as it would not be covered under the current MOU. It is important to note that the current MOU states that ACPS will complete capital improvements on school sites.

### **City Staff Recommendation**

With the current and requested resources available for ACPS capital projects, it is recommended that the School Board determine the priority of fully funding the scope of work proposed by the Maury Schoolyard Initiative advocacy group and weigh that against other capital infrastructure needs within the constraints of current and planned ACPS capital funding.

Should City Council desire to provide additional resources for this project through the City Council add/delete process, City staff recommends completion of a third party cost estimate (currently being coordinated by ACPS staff) to understand the full cost of the project before releasing additional City investment. City staff also recommends that responsibilities for stormwater BMP maintenance at this site be established as an ACPS responsibility prior to the commencement of construction.

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<sup>1</sup> The full Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) can be found at: [http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/parks/ApprovedMOU\\_COA\\_ACPS.pdf](http://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/parks/ApprovedMOU_COA_ACPS.pdf)